

# ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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## Co-Chairs:

Hon. Clyde Burmaster  
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

## Minutes of Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Strategic Planning Meeting

January 6, 2006

## Members:

James Allen  
Hon. Vince Anello  
Tim Doolittle  
Hon. Wright Ellis  
Matthew Enstice  
Samuel Ferraro  
Richard Geiger  
Hon. Timothy Kennedy  
Celeste Lawson  
Maria Lehman  
Hon. Peter McMahon  
Hal Morse  
Jo Nasoff-Finton  
Hon. Sean O'Connor  
Dr. Gary Praetzel  
Melinda Rath Sanderson  
F. Tim Reese  
David Rosenwasser  
Hon. William Ross  
Diane Ruszala  
Laura St. Pierre  
Christopher Schoepflin  
Hon. Demone Smith  
Hector Titus  
Timothy Wanamaker  
Peter Wendel

**Present:** Burmaster, Weinstein, Allen, Doolittle, Ellis, Ferraro,  
McMahon, Morse, Nasoff-Finton, Rath Sanderson, Ross,  
Titus, Wanamaker, Wendel

**Excused:** Enstice, Praetzel, Reese, Ruszala

**Absent:** Anello, Geiger, Kennedy, Lawson, Lehman, O'Connor,  
Rosenwasser, St. Pierre, Schoepflin, Smith, Casale, Witul

The meeting was called to order at 8:40 a.m. by Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster and Barry Weinstein, MD. ENRP Member Jo Nasoff-Finton and the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA) were thanked for hosting the meeting.

Minutes of the December, 2005 meeting were approved.

ENRP Administrator Tod Kniazuk began our strategic planning discussion by detailing three housing options; the Erie County Legislature, ECIDA, and Empire State Development (ESD). The Legislature is speculative at this point. ECIDA could provide physical housing (including office space, phone, e-mail, etc.), some limited support, and act as an employer as long as they were being reimbursed. ESD could physically house ENRP, but we would need to set up our own payroll and other aspects of employment.

Nasoff offered to host the Erie County meetings at the ECIDA, even if the organization is not housed there. ENRP Member Samuel Ferraro offered the Niagara County Center for Economic Development as a host for the Niagara County general and subcommittee meetings. In response to a question from Co-Chair Weinstein, Ferraro noted there could possibly be a "presence" for ENRP at the Center in terms of some workspace.

Ferraro then said that he could have his staff take minutes for the Niagara County meetings, and asked if someone could do the same for the Erie County meetings. "If we relieve the agency of some

## Ad Hoc:

Michael Casale  
Lawrence Witul

## Administrator:

Tod A. Kniazuk

expense, do we need full time employment” he said. “Could it then be part time,” Ferraro asked, referring to the ENRP administrator position.

ENRP Member James Allen replied that to coordinate ENRP effectively, it really is a full time job. Ferraro replied that ECIDA and the Center could also offer interns to help with work, as well as Niagara County staff.

Nasoff noted that the ECIDA could not provide staff to take minutes at the Erie County meetings.

Co-Chair Burmaster added that part of the answer to whether the position is full or part time is the response we receive to our fundraising letter. What Ferraro is talking about is a “disaster plan” in case we can’t convince anyone to donate, Burmaster said. Ellis asked how much time the clerical help would save.

Allen credited ENRP as being one of the most important organizations in the region, and as such we can’t afford not to do this right.

ENRP Member Peter Wendel referenced the mission statement and said that we don’t want to water down what we do. The glue is the coordinating position, and we don’t want to water that down either. He added that the administrator provides continuity by being at all our subcommittee and general meetings, and that we should strive to keep that in place.

ENRP Member Peter McMahon agreed with Wendel, and added that the administrator is also charged with attending other meetings on our behalf. We shouldn’t lose that, he said. McMahon pointed to the draft annual budget and suggested cutting the seed money for projects line in order to keep the administrator whole, as we can look for money for projects as they come up.

ENRP Member Hal Morse offered his perspective as the head of a regional organization himself. If an organization like ENRP is not at least minimally staffed it will wither, he said. We should focus on what we need to do this year and gather resources for this year and for the future.

Niagara County Manager Gregory Lewis added that he is supportive of regional partnerships. Nasoff said that ENRP needs staff.

ENRP Member William Ross asserted that “our success dictates its importance and its future – we need ENRP.”

Ferraro determined that everyone was saying the same thing – ENRP is important, as is the administrator. His proposal is one that would maximize the administrator’s potential by relieving him of clerical duties, therefore freeing him up to focus on more important issues.

ENRP Member Wright Ellis agreed, saying he supported a part time position and relieving the administrator of some clerical duties.

ENRP Member Hector Titus liked the housing recommendations, and expressed hope that we will be pleasantly surprised with the response to our fundraising letter. He added that there needs to be an ongoing search for funding.

ENRP Member Melinda Rath Sanderson suggested that we quantify the in-kind donations made to ENRP, noting that these are big offers Nasoff and Ferraro are making. We should also quantify the time of the members themselves. Finally, we should set up a sustainability committee within ENRP to better pursue funding.

ENRP Member Timothy Wanamaker said he sees ENRP as the first steps toward a regional planning organization. Therefore, to do anything that jeopardizes it would be troublesome.

ENRP Member Tim Doolittle noted that this would give us a year to work on a more permanent solution.

Co-Chair Burmaster agreed with Wanamaker that regional planning should be the ultimate goal, and that ENRP has gained respect as an organization where there is no political agenda. He added that ENRP should not do anything less than it has in the past.

Co-Chair Weinstein said he was pleased by everyone’s comments, saying they reflect very well on the organization. He likened our current situation to that of a new family, with a lot of optimism but no money in the bank. Weinstein also noted that the offers to host meetings at the ECIDA and the Center seemed to be well received, and will be pursued. He continued that we can’t go through this every January, and so we need to raise funds for multiple years.

Weinstein summed up the group's work by saying we will pursue housing at ECIDA, pursue hosting at ECIDA and the Niagara County Center for Economic Development, send out the fundraising letters, and work on the 2006 membership. We will bring the revised strategic plan back to the group for their approval at the January 27, 2006 meeting. The group approved those items unanimously.

The next meeting date was set for Friday, January 27 at 8:30 a.m. at the Niagara County Center for Economic Development. The Co-Chairs thanked the group, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Submitted by Tod A. Kniazuk  
January 20, 2006